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LYRICS AND POEMS

TRANSLATIONS BY

EDITH DEAKE BROWNE
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LYRIC

(A very dark night, during a Calm, under
the Equator)

Number and Time are fallen, and Space
From out the firmament's black steeps
To the sea's sombre, still embrace.

Utterly does the night efface,
A shroud of silent gloom, it keeps
All Time, all Number and all Space.

Like dying years, with stolid face
The Soul to sleeping, freightless deeps,
To the sea's sombre, still embrace

Within itself, to darkest place,
Its memories, dreams and wishes sweeps,
And Time and Number and all Space,
To dim oblivion's calm embrace.

By LECONTE DE LISLE
Translated by Edith Deake Browne
36 State St., Portland, Maine

THE MILKY WAY

To the misty stars I said :
“ Why thus sadly gleams your light ?
Why is mournful message sped
Through uncouth leagues of night ? ”

In the firmament I see
White-clad virgins marching slow,
Steep ways threading wearily
By their tapers' flickering glow.

“ Walk you under some fell ban,
Praying always as you tread,—
That in radiance so wan
More of tears than light you shed ? ”

“ You, the stars, the ancestors,
Both of creatures and of gods,—
Are you in the Parcae's laws
Snared, and menaced by their rods ? ”

Fell the faint reply, afar :
“ Mortal, see our hopeless plight ;
Sisters thou believest we are,
Each caressing each with light.

“ Sisters, yes, but dwelling each
Far from each in trackless space ;

Doomed our tender beams to reach
Only night's unanswering face."

Starward bore my echoing mood:
"You are like the human soul,
In a boundless solitude
Wasting, never near its goal.

But the veil of distant day
Is your broideries' cloudy gold;
Cheer to worlds upon their way
Is the promise it doth hold.

Fain like destiny to earn,
Shall the seer, with steadfast gaze
Joyous paths of use discern
Through the coming eons' haze.

From the French of SULLY PRUDHOMME
(With two additional stanzas by
the translator, Edith Deake Browne)
36 State St., Portland, Maine

FRENCH AND ENGLISH SONG

Each little maiden —
All, in a ring,
Where woods, leaf-laden
Soft shadows fling !

ANSON DE GRAND-PERE

sez, les petites filles,
outes en rond.
vous voyant si gentilles,
es bois riront.

sez, les petites reines,
outes en rond.
amoureux sou les frênes
' embrasseront.

sez, les petites folles,
outes en rond.
bouquins dans les écoles
ourgeonneront.

sez, les petites belles,
outes en rond.
oiseaux avec leurs ailes
applaudiront.

GRANDFATHER'S SONG

Gazing as such pretty maids
Dance in a ring,
Merrily the sylvan shades
Laugh as they swing.

Circle, tiny queens and sweet,
All in a ring.
Lovers 'neath the trees will meet,
Fond vows to bring.

Books may bud and bloom, while vain
Their ding-dong ding :
Madcaps, dance, escaped their reign
All in a ring !

To the wee belles' flying feet
All in a ring,
Birds their gay applause shall beat
With flap of wing.

Dansez, les petites fées,
Toutes en rond.
Dansez, de bluets coiffées,
L'aurore au front.

Dansez, les petites femmes,
Toutes en rond.
Les messieurs diront aux dames
Ce qu' ils voudront.

. By VICTOR HUGO
[L' Art d' être Grand-Père)

Coiffed with blue flowers, elfins, race,
All in a ring ;
Bright dawn shining in the face
Of each small thing.

Mimic women, lightly glide
All in a ring.
Soon the days when you will bide
What lovers sing.

Translated by Edith Deake Browne
36 State St., Portland, Maine

KOMOR AND TIPHAINE

(Lord and Lady of the Castle of Kemper)

BY LECONTE DE LISLE

(Barbaric Poems)

Where errant moon her brilliant causeway paves
Or walks, cloud-dimmed above where ocean laves
Brittany's verge, there, in the froth of waves

Komor's stronghold opposed the storms with front
And lofty bulk unchanged. So, in its hunt
For prey the bird poised high in air is wont

To scan the deep. Fell a complaining vast
On all the coast. Mist throbbed upon the waste
As 't were drowned souls unshriven there outcast.

On darkened ramparts drummed the racing hail;
To cope with steadfast chains the blast did fail,
But on the slopes the trees bent to its wail.

Strewed with snapped oaken branches lay the wold,
Anon by direful shriek was frequent told
That to the cormorant's aim its prize was doled.

Within his sea-gnawed fastness its proud chief,
Mail-clad, paced in the torchlight, rent by grief
To which his ceaseless tread brought no relief.

To the increasing outer combat numb
He clutched at his unquiet heart, as, dumb
One feels in evil dream some terror come.

Vigorous, tall was he, stranger to fears,
But on his hard, gray-bearded face the tears
Attesting that he knew the woe which sears.

Ready as if for sacrifices crude
A weapon, a stained block as altar, stood
Beneath the downward gaze of pendent rood.

Moaned Komor, grieving, as with anguish shrunk,
Low on his knees before the Christ he sunk :
“ Will ne’er be done the office of that monk ? ”

Then with the glide of sandaled, slow footfall,
Parting the curtains hanging like a pall,
Came the confessor to the mournful hall.

“ My lord as you commanded I have done ;
But heed this hour the precept of God’s Son !
Such mercy show as for us He hath won . ”

To this entreaty, Komor made reply :
“ Priest, come not further than thy part doth lie ;
She who despised life’s holiest bond must die.

“ But think not base-born serf her doom shall tell.”
The friar withdrew, and Komor smote a bell
Sounding with heavy hand the fateful knell.

Sinister pealed the summons forth till lost
In low, far arches where ’neath armor crossed,
‘ Fearless, reproachless ’ slept the ancestral host.

Then was a stillness ; — till the sea forsook
Its wonted place and with exasperate look
The fissured staircase of its borders shook.

Now, coming slowly (‘ seeing, who would not weep ? ’)
A figure, calm as one whom angels keep,
Entered as if detached from shadows deep.

Tiphaine, untrembling, with unshaking knee,
The block, the sheathless sword, Christ on His Tree,
And her implacable, harsh spouse could see.

Gazing while she stood meekly as a dove, —
Said Komor to Tiphaine : (strange was his love !)
“ For sin like thine thou must account above.”

“I shall of Saint Anne, Mary, Christ, obtain
Peace,” she replied ; “Sir lord, God still thy pain !” —
“Of Vanne’s fair house unworthy child, Tiphaine,

“Unfit the honor of thy sires to share,
Opprobrium of the name which thou dost wear,
Thy pardon beg the Saviour to declare.

“Long I have suffered thee, I yet can wait.”
And Komor backward drew, not voicing hate.
And ’neath her golden hair, as day grew late,

Flecked with the torchlight glancing in the shade,
While the knife’s glittering threat was briefly stayed
And night unrolled its numerous sounds, she prayed ; —

But soon in rapturous dream forgot her plight,
Recalled her brow with freshest roses dight
In former time of joyousness and light

When in her innocence, O Virgin kind,
Her guileless offerings where thou wast enshrined
Were flowers of sweet aroma, prayer-entwined.

Crowned was she also in her dream, forsooth,
With bloom of ageless love in dew of youth ; —
Bright vision of hope and faith in very truth !

Soon burst a storm full-like to this now wrought
In seas' and winds' wild tumult ; — she, distraught,
Had bent to Komor's wrath, his mercy sought.

But when, in numbing calm forbore to roll
Love's mighty waves, stilled in her deepest soul, —
Again his coming re-awaked the whole,

Who once her being had stirred, whom now she will,
Mayhap, rejoin : (for vengeance swift its fill
Had not delayed to take, his blood to spill

On Komor's steel) who had, presumptuous, gained
From Komor's shield its gem and thus profaned
The scutcheon : — of its fairness naught remained.

Rousing Tiphaine, said Komor : “ Tell me how
Thou bearest just decree. Dost to it bow ?
Repent and wash with blood thy trespass now ;

“ I would not with thy flesh thy soul destroy.”
Replied Tiphaine : “ Thine ire is due, my joy
Is that I evermore without alloy

“ Will love him. But God's clemency I ask, —
And of thee that thou dost perform thy task.”
Gravely then answered Komor : “ From thy mask

“ Depart ! Another Judge thy cause must sift :
Thy treason makes life but a widening rift.”
Then pausing only her soft hair to lift

Tiphaine approached the block and on it laid
Her lovely head. Swift did the hissing blade
Descend. Thus was her expiation made.

Her soul being fled, upraisèd then her lord
Her fallen corse from which the life still poured —
And head with vacant eyes, as ’t were some hoard

Most precious. Mounting then the turret’s height
Which spied unceasing on the sea-bird’s flight,
He cast his burden to the furious night.

From storm-swept battlement he saw unfurl,
As to receive some lost and priceless pearl,
The hungry depths of the abyss’s whirl.

Then on his white, dishonored head with sigh
Making the sacred sign, intent to die,
Uttering, as all-bereft, a bitter cry

Which far the mighty wind through great trees bore,
He, arms outstretched, into the sea leaped o’er
Which gave not back his bones upon its shore.

So died Tiphaine and Kemper’s lord, Komor.

[Free] Translation by Edith Deake Browne
36 State St., Portland, Maine

TO MY SOUL

Fly, spotless soul, that body worn ;
Fly, singing, towards the unknown bourn !

I envied not, in youth and strength,
Closed eyes the cere-cloth's pressure chill ;
In the great woods, through richest length,
I wandered at unsated will :
Anon the elements and fear
Weighted with thought my gazing eyes
Soon bandaged close with sweat and tear,
Ending illusion and surprise.

Fly, spotless soul, that body worn ;
Fly, singing, towards the unknown bourn !

Dust-powdered from a stormy route,
Weary, I slip on wavering sands ;
But now, poor traveler, naught doth moot ;
Yonder oasis opening stands ;
The rolling heavens, gemmed, cloudless, see !
To bathe thee in their purest deep
Swing, lily-girt, the blue waves free —
Cast on the bank thy tatters, leap !

Fly, spotless soul, that body worn ;
Fly, singing, towards the unknown bourn !

Fly, pitying not that fleshly thing!
When sin's light ways thou saw'st me keep,
But yesterday, thou felt'st thy wing,
In durance pining and didst weep:
Wasted by fever now I die,
And, Captive Bird in densest copse,
Art daunted of (that thou dost sigh)
The gust that now thy prison opes?

Fly, spotless soul, that body worn;
Fly, singing, towards the unknown bourn!

When, led by pleasure's phantom lust
But finding not the manna craved,
Befooled, my hunger fed on dust
And learned the paths with errors paved —
Not thou, O sleeping Dove and white,
Consenting or accomplice, spoiled;
No, fianced to the Infinite
Thou goest to thy Spouse unsoiled.

Fly, trembling not, that body worn;
Fly, singing, towards the unknown bourn!

From where in peace the Infinite broods,
Thy comrades' struggle thou shalt cheer;
When, thoughtless in their playful moods,
Thou see'st the fair-haired children near

The flower-veiled graves ; — on crumbled tomb
Fall fruits for which this clay is spent,—
Not poppies' mere but choicer bloom
Most strange, shall greet thee, — thy content.

Fly, spotless soul, that body worn ;
Fly, singing, towards the unknown bourn !

By HEGESIPPE MOREAU

[Free] Translation by Edith Deake Browne

May fourth, 1902

36 State St., Portland, Maine

ANSWER

Enter, A Christian

Fly not, O Soul, that body worn,
Unguided to the unknown bourn !

God give thee pause, O sin-tossed Soul,
Lest beauteous visions chimeras be,
Lest star-gemmed heavens that beckoning roll
Be trackless space, uncharted sea ;
Lest the fair oasis be a dream,
The lilies rudely fretted stones
'Gainst which the alluring billows gleam
With ripple soft ere tempest moans !

Fly not, O Soul, that body worn,
Guideless toward the unknown bourn !

Amidst the desert's fiery sands,
As 'twere a mountain fortress bold,
A Rock,¹ a Being, protecting stands,
Shelter and Guide by sage foretold :—
That Being the unmeasured space had mapped
Before its gemming orbs emerged
In His resistless laws enwrapped
Whose power incessant through them surged.

¹ Isaiah xxxii : 2.

Fly not, O Soul, that body worn,
Defenceless to the unknown bourn !

The prophet warns in words austere,
Pleads with thee loftiest strain of muse
Adown the march of centuries drear,
The succor of that Shield to choose.
Speak¹ to that Rock once smitten² for thee,
And through the rift to Its deep Heart
Thy whisper faint will surely flee
As bird from prisoning cage would dart.

Fly not, O Soul, that body worn,
Helpless unto the unknown bourn !

Sure is that Refuge. Would'st thou proof ?
The Message glows from history's dawn ;
First kept by mystic Race aloof
The wondrous lore, — then, later, borne
Through Close and Crypt and Cell and Dark
Till speech of every human clan
Its chariot is, its covenant ark.
Do wings of brooding cherub span ?

Fly not, O Soul, that body worn,
Lonely, toward the unknown bourn !

¹ Numbers xx : 8.

² Exodus xvii : 6.

Word, shown of old in constant type,
Judge, Elder, King attest its truth :
Its Promise, bloomed, when time grew ripe
Is witnessed, sealed, through weal and ruth,
In valiant strife, in blood outpoured
Of Apostle, Martyr (each whose name
Is in the shining record stored)
And myriads lost to earthly fame.

Fly not, O Soul, that body worn,
Alone, unto the unknown bourn !

Flowing replete with undreamed good,
Behold the Hands that reach for thee,
Bearing renewing lave and Food
And magnet : He hath voyaged that sea :
Its speeding isles and their far goal
Confess their only Master, Him.
Thy Captain and thy Course, O Soul,
Discern through fading light and dim.

Fly not, O Soul, that body worn,
Unguided, to the unknown bourn !

By the translator, Edith Deake Browne
36 State Street, Portland, Maine









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